Platform Cooperativism Consortium

INSTITUTE FOR THE COOPERATIVE DIGITAL ECONOMY

SOLIDARITY GAPS: WHY FRENCH NANNIES WANT THEIR OWN PLATFORM COOPERATIVE

By Dr. Maïmonatou Mar

Abstract

This paper investigates the evolution of job search experiences among nannies in France in the context of digital transformation. Drawing on collective interviews with nannies organized through the nonprofit Gribouilli, the study examines how unpaid work has intensified and how traditional forms of social support—offered by children, colleagues, and former employers—are challenged on care labor platforms like Bébé Nounou.

Using theories of solidarity, the digital divide, and reproductive labor, this research introduces the concept of solidarity gaps, revealing three key obstacles to mutual aid on care platforms: (1) the organizational complexity of mobilizing support networks, (2) communicational dissonance in crafting profiles and job ads, and (3) the uneven distribution of economic and social costs, which affect not only nannies but their socio-digital ecologies. These gaps expose the limits of techno-design in a sector historically shaped by gender, race, and class hierarchies.

The study argues that while traditional labor platforms are structurally unfit to address these issues, platform cooperatives offer promising alternatives—yet often lack the investment ecosystem to implement it. It draws on Gribouilli's cooperative initiative and global examples in nannycare like IMA Limpia and Homecare (SEWA), contributing to ongoing debates on solidarity tech and cooperative design.

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Bio

Dr. Maïmonatou Mar is a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Cooperative Digital Economy. She is the co-founder of Gribouilli, the only non-profit organization dedicated to supporting nannies in France, which is currently transitioning into a platform cooperative. Alongside her mother, Aminata Diouf—a decorated figure in the profession—she has organized over 1,500 women committed to high-quality early childhood education and job security for both parents and providers.A recipient of several prestigious honors, including recognition from the Obama Foundation, she currently works for an international foundation empowering marginalized youth through access to education, employment, and sustainable livelihoods.

Maïmonatou holds a Ph.D. in Materials Science, as well as degrees in chemistry and engineering. Her previous research at Université Clermont Auvergne (formerly Université Blaise Pascal) and Saft focused on advanced battery technologies.

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1. Introduction

Starting from the end of World War II, the French social model has championed childcare to accelerate the mass entry of women into the workforce while supporting the highest birth rate in Europe (Burger, 2012; Fagnani, 2010; Kamerman, 2006; Oláh, 2014). In 2022, babies under three were mainly provided care by 247 010 childminders – individuals working in their own homes with approval from local authorities –, 103 000 to 137 000 childcare facilities workers, and 105 800 nannies (Cnaf, 2022; Fepem, 2024). However, recent crises, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, have revealed systemic challenges in an industry that is undervalued and unstructured, while pursuing competing aims such as child well-being, parents' careers and development of childcare jobs (Fagnani, 2010; Giampino, 2016; Hcfea, 2018b; Vitaud, 2020). This paper focuses on nannies who generally work full time in the home of families as their employees (Bressé & Bédel, 2016; Hcfea, 2018a). The limited academic studies on nannies primarily address domestic work and its characteristics, like gender and migration (Ibos, 2012, 2013; Meynaud et al., 2011). Nevertheless, labor dynamics have emerged as an urgent topic, as expectations of job creation are now replaced by reports on the workforce decrease. If officials consider demographics, some academics are investigating the rise of labor platforms in resonance with their counterparts abroad (Lima, 2024; Pulignano & Marà, 2021).

In this complex landscape, I seek to further explore how the care labor platform is impacting the job search experience of nannies. Three French care labor platforms are prominent in the industry formerly known for its word-of-mouth recruitment, agencies and physical job boards: Bebe Nounou, a dedicated job board launched in 2002, Yoopies and Nounou Top – also known as Aide au Top or Top Help – both created in 2011 and scaling internationally across the care sector. Looking at the research on labor platforms, the solidarity economy and the digital divide, I argue that care labor platforms limit social support systems that once efficiently engage in the nanny's job search, inducing long-term unemployment. This issue is even more crucial as job search on care labor platforms constitutes new and exhausting unpaid work (Mangan et al., 2023;

Pulignano & Marà, 2021) for predominantly female workers at the frontline of the reproductive economy and whose demographic is highly exposed to digital illiteracy (Sarı & Rızvanoğlu, 2023; Scheerder et al., 2017). I argue that it is not only the individual nanny who should be observed but also the collective support systems surrounding her, such as descendants, colleagues, parents – former employers –, or social workers. This assumption makes even more sense as their social capital, as limited it could be, is often their main asset in offline job search. Indeed, solidarity is not only the "why" and the "what" in the care industry but also the "how," as demonstrated by job search practices throughout history. Care labor platforms' failure to account for solidarities raises concerns about how solidarity operates within them, especially given the Web's universalist ideals. In the context of unpaid work, I have defined 'Solidarity gaps' as obstacles to horizontal support systems–mutual aid between nannies and their socio-digital ecologies– and vertical support systems– the broader systemic solidarity provided by institutions or platforms themselves.

Based on the case study of French nannies, this paper reflects on the former and seeks to elaborate learning questions that may be investigated by researchers and key stakeholders: How has job search evolved for nannies and their social circles? Have solidarity systems grown, sustained or collapsed on care labor platforms? What are the solidarity gaps? What are the strategies to overcome them? Indeed a better understanding of how care and tech intersect, both described as key elements of the future of work, may contribute to coping with labor dynamics. This is particularly of interest for care platform cooperatives across the globe, which are means of collective action (Scholz, 2023) and thrive to offer value-based alternatives by design : Homecare (India), IMA Limpia (Colombia), We Care (South Africa), Homenet Thailand (Thailand), Beyond Care (United States), Care Together (Australia), Suara Cooperativa (Spain) and Gribouilli who have been organizing French nannies, including the respondents.

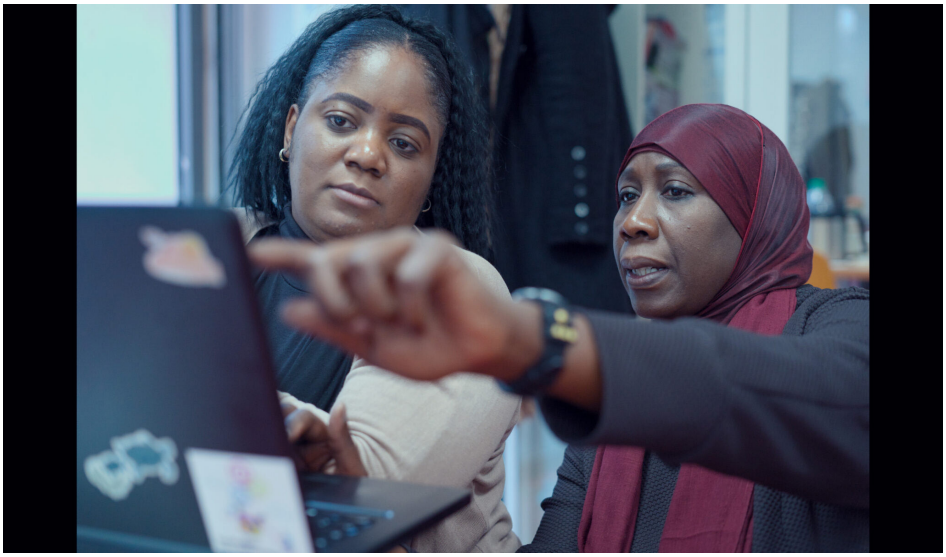

Figure 1: Gribouilli workers

This article is an intent to answer this question: Do care labor platforms require nannies to mobilize their socio-digital economies and do they enable this support? The following chapters will show that because of the digital divide, this solidarity is necessary but hindered by the design of platforms, resulting in further digital inequalities.

The article is structured as follows: First, it provides literature on care labor platforms, collective approaches to the digital divide, multidisciplinary solidarity theories from ancient Rome to contemporary philosophy which form the framework for analysis, and a care platform cooperatives' review. This section aims at laying foundations for the novel concept of solidarity gap in the context of unpaid work; Second, it describes the methodology for conducting a collective interview with a group of French nannies. Third, it describes highlights on how some dimensions of the solidarity systems are shaped by labor platforms and the collateral consequences for nannies. Finally, the discussion addresses points of view on perspectives and challenges for research, innovation, social change, and public policies at a turning point in tech hegemony.

2. Literature

2.1 Online job search, a new unpaid work for nannies

As the digital economy grows and generates platform work, ride-hailing is one of the most Research on care labor platforms in France remains scarce. However some existing research focuses on the technological aspect. In this paragraph I will overview their findings.

France stands out in the digital care sector for its highly institutionalized and regulated approach. Unlike models of platform "uberization" seen elsewhere, French care labor platforms operate within a state-supported framework that prioritizes salaried employment and embed themselves within the welfare regime through sectoral public subsidies, tax credits, and industrial policy support (Lima, 2024). The academic project ResPecTMe has provided valuable insights on the characteristics of Yoopies and Aide au Top – Top Help's group – in a comparative study of the gig economy in Europe. Both platforms use algorithmic matching systems based on temporal, spatial, and reputation metrics. While both allow free worker registration, premium accounts – 7-10 EUR/month – are essential for accessing client details and boosting visibility – ID verification. Yoopies nudges workers to lower rates below local averages and offers optional administrative support for contracts, aligning with French law, whereas Top Help avoids contractual involvement (Franke, n.d.; Pulignano & Marà, 2021).

On both French platforms, unpaid work – occurring online and offline – has been theorized as time-based forms of unpaid work and non-time-based forms of unpaid work. The former includes activities such as "Job searching and applications, Meeting potential clients in person, involving commuting to a client's home or a meeting place, Travel time to and from work", relevant in this case study only for short contracts, whether considered as side jobs or not.

The latter includes “Paying fees to communicate with clients, apply for jobs, or increase job opportunities, Paying a one-time fee for ID verification, Investment in work equipment and products, No entitlement to social security protection when employment relation is not registered according to national regulations” which occurs despite the administrative services offered by the platforms among others, or the national voucher systems CESU and Pajemploi (Franke, n.d.; Lima, 2024; Mangan et al., 2023; Pulignano & Marà, 2021). It should be noted that Yoopies promotes independent contractors which weakens the social security protection but decreases the cost for the client (Yoopies, n.d.). Like Care.com in the US, both platforms could undertake measures to limit the negative impacts of informality and the subsequent race to the bottom to attract clients (Pulignano & Marà, 2021; Ticona & Mateescu, 2018).

Research on care labor platforms in Spain has shown that unpaid work is partly driven by the logic of personal branding originally designed for high-skilled workers, which fails to effectively enable care workers or rationalize visibility (De Marco et al., 2023; Dumont et al., 2024; Ustek Spilda et al., 2022). On Care.com in the US, therefore nannies are obliged to distinguish themselves from babysitters since full-time positions and others lack distinctive channels for instance (Mateescu & Ticona, 2020). If self-branding generally slightly crosses the professional-personal line, in the case of the nannies it is the other way around. Unlike other gig workers, care workers must demonstrate genuine passion through their profile, reputation and availability – and response time – in order to build trust while clients would reveal most of their information only in the later stages of hiring. Beyond privacy and socio-emotional tensions, concerns arise regarding the opaque functioning of care labor platforms and their mishandling of intersectional inequalities in a gendered and racialized workforce. The same information may induce different benefits and harms for different nannies, as demonstrated for Black and Brown with “trustworthiness signifiers” but still appearing at the bottom. This adds up with the fact that clients use stereotypes to evaluate the matching which encourages many to further engage with management visibility and integrate the expectations (Fetterolf, 2022; Mateescu & Ticona, 2020; Ticona & Mateescu, 2018). Because intersectionality varies across

countries, inequalities manifest differently among social groups—for example, in India versus Canada (Rathi & Tandon, 2021; Yin, 2024).

One of the outcomes of unpaid work for care workers is the "frustration among respondents, who feel they have wasted time" (Pulignano & Marà, 2021), echoing description of anxiety and exhaustion in Turkish research (Sarı & Rızvanoğlu, 2023). Using previous literature on offline job search, a paper on low-qualified workers in Spain, including in the nanny care, revealed that labor platforms "raise new tensions preventing their effective utilization and fostering job search discouragement, ultimately increasing vulnerability and exclusion from the labour market" (Dumont et al., 2024). Three major causes were determined: limited understanding of platforms and clients during the crafting online profiles, information asymmetry between job seekers and recruiters mediated by platforms when applying for jobs, and subsequent communication asymmetry when reviewing application statuses. Information asymmetry can be related to intrinsic features of care labor platforms like the "unfavourable imbalance in the candidates/vacancy ratio" in the labor platforms. Further work demonstrated that the inequalities place low-skilled workers at a higher risk of job discouragement or burnout as they are accustomed to offline job searches that do not require digital skills (De Marco et al., 2023; Dumont et al., 2024).

Overall, quotes of respondents across the previous studies relates to the perception of efficiency of the care labor platforms. Research on labor platforms for low-skilled has been inconclusive in assessing if the online job search is worth the money when results are positively correlated for high-skilled (De Marco et al., 2023). Nonetheless, individualization of risk on care workers in France was observed, materializing in economic and social costs they consent to on Yoopies and Aide Au Top, even risking their lives (Pulignano et al., 2023). Research abroad has confirmed this and shown how care labor platforms prioritize their reputational risks by practicing surveillance and control over nannies, sometimes introducing additional risks to clients, all while optimizing flexploitation and value extraction including in the unpaid work (Flanagan, 2019; Gurumurthy et al., 2021; Kluzik, 2022; Mateescu & Ticona, 2020; McDonald et al., 2021; Rathi & Tandon, 2021; Willem Pieter et al., 2021).

Most care workers accumulate both paid and unpaid reproductive labor, putting the possibilities of sharing it with others at risk (Kluzik, 2022; Yin, 2024). Before care labor platforms, French nannies were exempt from unpaid work and benefited from extensive support from relatives, colleagues, parents – former employers –, and professionals during their offline job search. Nanny care agencies who hold similar positions to the care labor platforms would undertake most of the job search tasks, charging only clients. With care labor platforms, they assume the unpaid work of the job search, facing cumulative workloads across the different platforms they use, and challenges in the possibilities of sharing it with others. In the US, Mateescu and Ticona have highlighted the ingenuity of leveraging social support and the limitations of mutual aid on care labor platforms: “These social workarounds show the limits of the individual address of platforms visibility regimes, and the invisible collective labor that is essential to the construction of individual visibility. Despite their appearance as a vast pool of individual profiles, many workers are linked together through invisible networks of mutual aid and support.” (Mateescu & Ticona, 2020; Ticona, 2022). Nevertheless, I have found no dedicated studies on the collaborative use of care labor platforms that assess the capacities of sharing the unpaid work of online job searches.

These findings in the context of unpaid work underscore the structural barriers that hinder mutual aid and collective coping strategies in digital job search, suggesting the need to examine how nannies and their social environments experience and navigate these evolving constraints in practice.

2.2 Navigating the digital divide on care labor platforms

To understand how care labor platforms reshape job search experiences for nannies, it is essential to explore how the digital divide affects their ability to realize the unpaid work and therefore find employment. This digital challenge gives the rationale for them to mobilize their social support. It may be assumed that nannies are digital literate and that individualism of the labor platform is

adequate but from the literature, concerns can be raised. In parallel, research on the digital divide offers insights on the collective use of the Internet.

In the second wave of research on the digital divide, the focus shifted from disparities in access to Information and Communication Technology to disparities in people's online skills. Hargittai et al. introduced the digital inequalities and digital literacy (Hargittai, 2005; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2006). They highlighted the significant role of "support networks" in various contexts, including the job searches (Hargittai, 2002). As early as 2001, they have raised awareness on this topic to be considered as of "high priority" yet little efforts have been made since then. They have further argued that not only skills but also motivation can be improved by "social support" breaking into three categories: technical assistance from persons employed to provide it, technical assistance from friends and family members, and emotional reinforcement from friends and family in the form of commiseration (DiMaggio et al., 2001). Several authors have extended their studies to the "proxy internet use" when a non users of the internet still benefit from it thanks to a users among their networks showing that the "intergenerational solidarity" is no longer the main phenomenon observed with the rise of "intragenerational solidarity" including within the couple (Dolničar et al., 2018; Grošelj et al., 2022). Carmi and Yates developed the concept of "networks of literacy" in the context of digital literacy and data literacy, emphasizing similarities with written and media literacies, which depend on networks and have been the focus of extensive policies (Carmi & Yates, 2020; Yates & Carmi, 2022). Their investigation turned out to have mostly work and personal uses, and little community or civic activity online. The results consisted in a modelization of how the mutual aid operates into a two-step flow echoing former theories looking at multiple parameters such as the size of the network, the nature and strength of the relationship, the assets of the network (access, skills, motivation), the compensation either online or offline, and more (Courtois & Verdegem, 2016) eventually carrying forward the theories of network and neighborhood effects to frame socio-digital ecologies (Helsper, 2021).

Overall, social support is a significant means to cope with the digital divide. A

recent paper showed the widening of employment gap after COVID-19 leaving behind less advantaged groups due to poor digital capital except in case of intrafamily support provided by individuals with higher education (Männasoo et al., 2023). However, across all the research, some pitfalls and downsides of social support have been described as well with poor upskilling of the concerned persons (Dolničar et al., 2018; Grošelj et al., 2022; Yates & Carmi, 2022), the mild effect of networks in deprived communities where the digital skills are quite low and homogeneous (Li & Chen, 2021), the negative effects of unsupportive relatives (Sarı & Rızvanoğlu, 2023), the burden for them or the absence of positive effect and even growing exclusion of the most isolated persons (Dolničar et al., 2018; Grošelj et al., 2022). Among the limitations of digital divide research, the inability to disentangle offline and online social support has been noted multiple times, including in job searches, such as when requiring references (Dumont et al., 2024; Fieseler et al., 2014).

These findings on digital inequalities and the limitations of online social support highlight the emergence of "solidarity gaps" on care labor platforms, setting the stage for analyzing how techno-design further impedes mutual aid among nannies and their networks. This paradigm requires deeper understanding in the context of unpaid work, reinforcing barriers for vulnerable workers, and questions the lack of intentionality of labor platforms in creating solidary and universal digital spaces despite the original promise of the web.

2.3 Care workers in quest of solidarity in the poorly universal Web

The literature highlights how digital spaces contribute to shaping an overarching e-society marked by unequal citizenship, reinforcing offline inequalities related to culture, economy, and power through intersecting axes of discrimination (Ragnedda, 2017). Regardless of the country, due to the poor labour market, migration and care policies, the 70.1 million nannies and other domestic workers have not eluded exclusion, domination and exploitation – including forced labor –, despite being key in welfare and economy. Since the rise of the care labor

platforms as a vehicle for independent work, concerns have been raised about the loss of labour protections that initially account for only ten percent (Digital Future Society, 2022; International Labour Office, 2018). While the freedom and means of association and collective bargaining are still not granted worldwide and for all groups (International Labour Office, 2018), I argue that efforts toward a more universal Web (Cailliau, 1995; CERN, 2025; Contract for the Web, 2019; Musicco-Nombela, n.d.; University of Illinois Library, 2009; W3C, n.d.) still overlook the urgency of its key feature: solidarity. Indeed, with his theory of recognition, Honneth explains how solidarity forges self-esteem, responding to the denigration of ways of life and fostering collective action and resistance in the labor and citizenship landscapes, and corrects universalism's pitfalls (Honneth, 1996). Using Laitinen critics of standard individualistic moral theories in regard to a "we-mode" (Laitinen, 2023), I argue that Diagne outlines a concept of solidarity. Considering post-colonial thoughts as a condition of universalism, Diagne explores plural African philosophies that have inspired global justice. Concepts like ubuntu during the apartheid in South African, or Nite during the West African decolonization, define the primary common goal as being human together, including in our relations with nature, and considering "...that man is the remedy of man is to say that humanity is not a state but a becoming and a task, and that my neighbor is someone who helps me accomplish that." (Cornell & Diagne, 2024; Diagne, n.d., 2022, 2023).

In this context, it is crucial to note that Solidarity tech has emerged as a recent term and movement which mainly speaks to the intersection of the Social and Solidarity Economy and digital spaces. It is of interest since its values carry the potential to solve unpaid work and solidarity gaps, especially for marginalized groups such as nannies. As a political solidarity (Laitinen, 2023), Solidarity tech showcases an approach to workers collectives and communities that outpace the collaboration but rather seek economic justice against the damages of neoliberalism. Therefore Solidarity tech can be considered to be part of the new wave of solidarities occurring in the labor landscape and that can be expected to cope with its weakening (Bayurgil et al., 2023; Hunt-Hendrix & Taylor, 2024; Morgan & Pulignano, 2020). For instance, collective response to scams by nannies

and their fellow care workers during the job search on Care.com “suggests that organizing platform-based workers based on their shared risks, rather than shared identity, might create avenues for future organizing.” (Ticona, 2022). This is all more relevant in the care sector worldwide where most of the traditional unions haven’t fully engaged yet (Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2019; Schmalz et al., 2023; Working on Digital Labour Platforms, 2020), while grassroots initiatives contribute in closing the gap with notable intersectional and anti-colonialist approaches to data. NDWA Labs is a project of the social movement organization National Domestic Workers Alliance (2007) which has already developed digital tools to strengthen the safety net and create sectorial intelligence for millions of women and immigrants in the US (NDWA Labs, n.d.; Working on Digital Labour Platforms, 2020; Working on Digital Labour Platforms, 2020; Treni & Clement, 2021). BuurtzorgWeb is a cornerstone of back office support in the nonprofit Buurtzorg (2006) enabling a limited administrative team of fifty for ten thousand nurses in the Netherlands, therefore counteracting policies dictating middle management for this gendered workforce (Bernstein et al., 2022; Betz, 2016; Gill & de Blok, 2021). Unpaid care is not left behind as illustrated by the recent UE research action Families-share for peer-to-peer childcare support between working parent (Families_Share Trento CityLab, n.d.; Socializing and Sharing Time for Work/ Life Balance through Digital and Social Innovation, n.d.) or Kobe enabling volunteering caregiving and mutual care within the 30 million member Japanese Consumers’ Co-operative Union (Gurumurthy et al., 2021; Japanese Consumers’ Co-operative Union, 2022). Important Solidarity tech are found among platform cooperatives acting as Social and Solidarity Economy alternatives to dominant platforms (Gurumurthy, 2020; Gurumurthy et al., 2021; Johnston & Land-Kazlauskas, 2019; Potjomkina & Dovgan, 2022). Similar to traditional cooperatives, platform cooperatives have advantages over corporate platforms to fight poverty and are defined as: “Platform cooperativism as a movement seeks to apply internationally recognized cooperative principles to the digital economy, particularly in the realms of labour and internet infrastructure, in order to foster digital economy solidarity and to reframe concepts such as growth, innovation, efficiency, and sustainability for the (financial) long-term benefit of the many rather than the few.” (Mannan et al., 2023; Scholz, 2016).

Platform cooperatives represent a perfect setting to address solidarity gaps in the online job search. The principles may foster intentionality in limiting unpaid work and fostering collaboration, including from the support networks. The next paragraph offers an overview of this innovation in the care sector while highlighting the advancements and challenges.

2.4 The challenges of data collectivism in care platform cooperatives

In a general context of more than 400 platform cooperatives initiatives striving to break even without benefiting from equivalent support of labor platforms (Bertolini, 2024; Gurumurthy et al., 2021), I identified very few platform cooperatives involving nannies. To lay the groundwork, I introduce them with updated information they have provided for this paper.

- Homecare is a platform cooperative gathering nannies and other domestic workers in Gujarat, India, and affiliated with the SEWA Co-operative Federation known for empowering 300 000 Indian women in the informal economy since 1992[1]. The latter builds upon a previous attempt to create a beauty service platform with the support from The Platform Development Toolkit, a dedicated global capacity building program (Digital Future Society, 2022; Gurumurthy et al., 2021; International Labour Organization, 2022; SEWA Cooperative Federation, n.d.; SEWA Homecare, n.d.).

- IMA Limpia is the digital brand providing services from fifty-four domestic workers including nanny care services for children above three in Medellin, Colombia thanks to low cost technologies like their website, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook since 2021[2]. Corporación Union Cristal, the cooperative behind was created by the Afro-Colombian Domestic Service Workers Union (UTRASD), the first-ever union created entirely by Afro-descendant women in 2013 whose aim is to improve rights, address discrimination and provide support. IMA Limpia development benefited from support like the Equal Value, Equal Rights program along with Asoclim. This fellow platform cooperative of cleaning domestic workers in four cities of

Ecuador was founded by the Unión Nacional de Trabajadoras Remuneradas del Hogar y Afines (UNTHA) in 2020 and run using a Web application (Bertolini, 2024; Fundación Bien Humano, 2022; Igual Valor, Iguales Derechos, n.d.; IMA Limpia, n.d.; Igual Valor, Iguales Derechos, 2021; International Labour Organization, 2022; Pérez et al., 2022).

- Domavip is the platform of the French cooperative GED Sans Frontières accredited for nanny care services since birth and running since 2021 on low cost technologies like Whatsapp, Airtable and Gsuite subsidized by the State and funds like Nos Epaules Et Vos Ailes. The platform is designed for joint programs with employment agencies and NGO whose beneficiaries need childcare, while a second one called BFF will contract with companies endorsing childcare policies for their employees. The cooperative was cocreated by Gribouilli the only non profit dedicated to 1500 nannies largely immigrants women in France since 2017 with education, social programs, advocacy and tools like a SMS Chatbot run on UNICEF's open-source software, RapidPro (Gribouilli, n.d.; Hcfea, 2018b; Serafin, 2024; Tchakounté Nkwadjio, 2022; Vitaud, 2019[3]).

Ongoing projects hint at the future of platform cooperatives in nanny care:

- We Care is a research action project led by the Digital Platform Cooperative Project (Social Law Project, Centrow) in partnership with South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) and United Domestic Workers of South Africa (UDWOSA) (CENTROW, n.d.; Digital Future Society, 2022; International Labour Organization, 2022; Pérez et al., 2022; We Care, n.d.).

- Homenet Thailand is building its platform cooperative for domestic workers since receiving dedicated funding from Japanese International Labour Foundation. It is also benefiting from its successful research action on motorcycle taxis (Homenet Thailand, n.d.; Tamsang-Tamsong, n.d.; Wantanasombut, 2023[4]).

- Beyond Care is a New York cooperative launched in 2008 by nineteen immigrant women in nanny care. In 2016, they had the project to use Coopify to launch their platform but had to suspend the project because of restrictive childcare and migration legislation halting the model[5]. Their partners Center for Family Life in Sunset Park and Colab were able to support other cooperatives including in-home cleaning with the web app Up&Go (Bertolini, 2024; Center for Family Life in Sunset Park, n.d.; CoLab Cooperative, n.d.; Quart, 2016).

- In 2023, the Australian government endowed the program Care Together to provide capacity building including on platform cooperatives in domestic work. For now, caregiving projects have joined the program but none in nannycare (Care Together, n.d.; CICOPA, 2023).

- Suara Cooperativa was born in 2008 from the merging of three cooperatives from the end of the past century. 5.300 people work in diverse industries in Spain including domestic work, childcare facilities and early childhood development counseling and interventions, and benefit from forefront technology for education, welfare and innovation. Nanny care is not part of their portfolio but no labor still unemployed nannies may use IntermediaJob, the platform they have cocreated with a non discriminatory algorithm (Intermedia, 2021; Suara Cooperativa, n.d.; Suara Cooperativa & Platform Cooperativism Consortium, 2022; Toomer-McAlpine, 2024).

Platform cooperatives in care and other industries stewart political solidarity enforcing workers' ownership against exclusion and domination. The cooperative principles uphold ideals against exploitation but are not normative in contrast to the complementary principles of Fairwork (Brittain, 2023) for instance. About unpaid work during online job search, this latter provides a design and management framework on due process for decisions affecting workers and equity in the management process (Fairwork, 2024) to assess that a platform cooperative like Asoclim – the only one scored in care – meets the strict minimum conditions (Fairwork, 2023). However, it doesn't address the impact of techno-design. Platform cooperatives face ethical deficit when developing upon data

maximalism – expansive data mining, user profiling and algorithmic targeting practices – hence fostering inequitable and unfair local economies. Indeed if able to afford technologies, they may want to compete with dominant platforms on an equal footing to survive (Gurumurthy et al., 2021) or produce most value with limited means by mimicking them[6].

> [Data collectivism models] reject the economy of data extractivism and, therefore, do not allow the creation of a commodity market where individual workers can trade their data. Instead, they focus on creating a fiduciary structure where the transactions data that workers generate in the course of their labour are pooled into a collective data pool on the basis of informed consent and clear use and purpose limitations. …Data collectivism as a business strategy enables the commonsification of data ownership, …giving cooperative enterprises an intelligence advantage based on a trusteeship or stewardship model of collective data ownership and administration.(Gurumurthy et al., 2021)

Platform cooperatives find "regenerative appropriation" in data collectivism balancing solidarity and the data-based intelligence useful for market and impact purposes, possibly sustaining a radical approach such as Equal Care (Gurumurthy, 2020; Gurumurthy et al., 2021). Inspired by Buurtzorg sociocracy model (Co-operatives UK, 2021), the platform cooperative practices communitization of care and mutual aid by onboarding the social support system of care receivers on the one hand. On the other hand, it supports paid and volunteering members as well as independents which onboard with minimal effort, as the profile's creation is completed after being hired and with support (Equal Care, n.d.-b, n.d.-a; Gurumurthy et al., 2021). Data collectivism requires co-design while navigating costs, skills and legal constraints[7] to offer an alternative to low cost technologies and data minimalism with trade-off on corporate clouds for instance (Bertolini, 2024; Gurumurthy et al., 2021; International Labour Organization, 2024).

The literature explores the novel concept of solidarity gap in the context of unpaid work during the job search. This section focused on nannies and other care workers that were required to do unpaid work,overlooking the digital divide affecting them. It shows that against all odds, labor platforms in care fail to be digital spaces of solidarity in so far as they hinder social support that could mitigate digital inequalities. Intersectional approaches, which articulate gender, race, and other factors, show how cultural, power, and economic inequalities are exacerbated for the frontrunners of reproductive labor. Collective approaches to online job search offer new insights on the potential of solidarity to fight exploitation, but remain understudied despite being complex as burgeoning experiences of platform cooperatives in care demonstrate. This study seeks to identify solidarity gaps on care labor platforms by analyzing how mutual aid in socio-digital ecologies interacts with unpaid work in these platforms. The following section describes the methodology used.

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedure

ADuring a semi-structured focus group, I collected experiences of online job search, particularly on care labor platforms, and, for comparative purposes, some experiences of offline job search before the Internet and today. The session gathered a sampling of nine nannies for 3 hours, in-person (except for G1 that ended up joining on the phone). The conversation in French was recorded then time-transcribed using Scribe (CEMEA), followed by manual correction. The analysis was conducted on this material, and manual translation to English and minor editing was done only for quotes used in this paper.

As described in the previous section, solidarity exists when mutual aid between individuals occurs alongside a sense of belonging that binds them together (Four uses of Solidarity, Bayertz). First, from their interview, I listed all the intended or realized actions of support they received or provided – e.g. managing the inbox –, the nature of the social support possibly referring to the literature (DiMaggio

et al., 2001; Dolničar et al., 2018; Grošelj et al., 2022) – e.g. technical assistance in the case of digital inequalities –, the unpaid work involved, possibly referring to the literature (Pulignano & Marà, 2021)– e.g. opening an account on the platform –, the platform used or third party in the case of offline job search – e.g. Bébé Nounou –, the phase of job search addressed, referring to the literature (De Marco et al., 2023)– e.g. crafting online profiles, the relationship involved – e.g. daughter – and, when relevant the group membership it falls into – e.g. family. I did not mention platforms or devices in my questions but instead built upon their experience.

Second this information was used to answer the following questions to spot underpinning solidarity gaps in horizontal relationships, namely obstacles to social support within socio-digital ecologies:

- Is regular mutual aid limited, sustained, or facilitated on care labor platforms and during online job searches?

- Do care labor platforms and online job search make mutual aid obsolete, or do they generate new needs for it? If so, do they support these needs?

In this same interview, the vertical relationships with care labor platforms were also discussed to identify possible mutual aid and their role in fostering or hindering solidarity values in regard to labor platforms narratives. The results will be exploited in a forthcoming paper.

After the interviews revealed significant changes in the job search, screenshots of platforms and their former versions stored in Internet Archive were collected to contextualize nannies' narratives.

Finally nannies were asked to complete a survey on personal information to qualify the sampling.

3.2 Sample

For this paper, I interviewed nine members of Gribouilli—the only non-profit in France dedicated to nannies—some of whom are founding members of the cooperative. They were selected after a call for participation was launched in a WhatsApp group for volunteers willing to engage in external activities, including research studies. No additional selection criteria were applied; only the most popular timeslot was chosen. All respondents are women aged 40 to 65, with migration backgrounds from Africa and South America, and reside and work in Île-de-France – Paris' region. They are all nannies matching the exact definition except one that we consider equivalent (B1 is nanny for older children and cumulates housekeeping) (Table 1.).

Demographic data in care shows that 96% of nannies are women, and 29% are immigrants – with Ivory Coast being the most common country of origin. By comparison, immigrants represent only 10% of the national workforce. Île-de-France is historically home to half of all nannies and half of all domestic workers with migration backgrounds, 58% of whom are from the Global South. Qualitative data show that immigrants are overrepresented in nanny care. While the average age for nannies is 39, it rises to 45 for immigrants, with 40% aged over 50 – eventually retired – (Lagandré et al., n.d.; Observatoire de l'emploi à domicile - FEPEM, 2024). Indeed, nanny care in France is defined as domestic work involving care for at least one baby under three years old in their home, where the nanny may also reside. Employers may be parents or an accredited agency (including self-employment for a few years). The typical job is a shared nanny care (two families) for full time, often for 50 hours/week and possibly on scattered hours, and children over three may be cared for after school. To make ends meet, nannies may work extra hours including in cleaning, babysitting, or caregiving contracts, especially when having part-time contract.

Despite diverse seniority – 2 were in the industry before the creation of platforms – all of the nanny respondents experienced a first career stage where they knew nothing about online job searches and a second one marked by Internet use, but

also unprecedented unemployment periods or default part time employment.

Respondents' profiles mirror national trends in terms of gender, migration background, age, and employment type, thus supporting the relevance of the findings to this specific labor sector. Their diverse professional trajectories, residency statuses, and digital literacy levels enable the study to capture a wide range of experiences in online job search, particularly among marginalized and underrepresented workers.

4. Results

This section focuses on solidarity gaps in horizontal relationships during the online job search, drawing attention to unseen realities rather than providing an exhaustive analysis. Care labor platforms require nannies to perform unpaid work which they may wish or need to outsource. Solidarity towards nannies may emerge from their socio-digital ecologies—networks and neighborhoods—as well as from care labor platforms. Mutual aid can occur during various stages of the process: the crafting of the profile, the application for the jobs or the reviewing of these application statuses. The latter two activities can often be performed simultaneously, as both supply and demand can be publicized concurrently.

To offer a basis for comparison, findings on solidarity in traditional offline job searches and the impact of digitalization on job searches are introduced first. To better understand how solidarity operates within nannies' socio-digital ecologies, Table 2. synthesizes a range of support actions drawn from the interviews. It categorizes these actions according to their nature, the unpaid work they address, the phase of the job search concerned, and the specific solidarity gaps they illustrate. This classification helps to highlight patterns and mismatches between the kinds of support needed and the constraints created by care labor platforms.

4.1 The digitalization of the job search

Prior to care labor platforms, nanny respondents mainly relied on social support to find leads through word-of-mouth. They would reach out to colleagues in nanny care or former occupations, relatives in the industry or not, parents who have previously employed them (being a reference de facto), shop tenants, school staff, fellow members of their religious communities, nanny agencies, etc. Relying on little information, some people would come back to them, each person bringing one or several qualified leads, namely with a phone call or a meeting proposal, or another source of information, thanks to relatively long chains of trust. In 1985, as an undocumented newcomer, K1 obtained her first job from an acquaintance of her elder sister's friend.

Small ads are very concise texts with minimal syntax and lexicon, necessarily providing contact information and are mostly free. This source of employment was complementary, except for isolated nannies, who were often beginners in the industry, newcomers, or new in town. Social support would come from former employers possibly presenting themselves as references prior to hiring – similar to the word-of-mouth scenario – as well as their broader support networks and neighborhoods pinning ads in her or their name or tracking ads. G1 started her career in 1998 as a babysitter then a caregiver. In 2002 she found her first job as a nanny through small ads:

> G1: I was told to go to the kiosk in Neuilly-sur-Seine. Then a friend told me to go to the American church. You don't get many people going there and there were lots and lots of free ads. I found my job [as a nanny] there.

Nanny respondents highlight the inclusiveness of these traditional offline job searches that exempt them from producing written or digital content that does not reflect their skills. The minimal barrier to meeting with families is a chance to interact with parents and babies which contribute to non-verbal communication, mutual "gut feeling", and other imperceptible elements that nannies rely on

to get hired. They have also noted that they didn't have to create content (even a resume) and that it was efficient as they never had to register at the unemployment agency.

In 2002, Bébé Nounou emerged but it is only in the early 2010's that a wave of platforms akin Yoopies and Nounou Top appeared with millennial parents. Since then, all the respondents have learned first about care labor platforms by word of mouth described above, even when digitally proficient to navigate alone on web search and social media. All nanny respondents have tried care labor platforms, eventually relying on proxy use, as reported by C1 with multiple successes. Indeed, on top of parents' online presence, other incentives were promoted such as professionalization or trust as B2 experienced in 2002.

> B2: I had a friend who told me I had to put small ads in bakeries, etc., ... and one afternoon I went to a community center in the sixteenth district. A worker tells me: "but you know you can go on the internet and find dedicated websites for that. Now, it's a bit dangerous to put your phone number on pieces of paper, there are bad people who use them". The other work recommended me some websites. I remembered only Bébé Nounou that I then have used.

Concomitantly, nanny respondents noticed less leads from word of mouth and small ads despite their ecosystems remaining active which I interpret as new parents' distrust in them. Before platforms, a sense of local community was shared by nannies working in the neighborhood and the families they work for even when facing patriarchal or colonialist behaviors (Ibos, 2012). They have reported that incidents in the square would trigger conversations by both parties. But for a few years only, becoming more digitalized or being informed by close employers, they have discovered dedicated groups for "Moms" on Facebook that were created almost two decades ago. They would disproportionately relay bad experiences, encourage surveillance in squares and homes, and promote control methods in contexts where forced labor already exists.

However they could not rely only on care labor platforms which they unanimously considered unreliable, regardless of their digital capital. In 2004, after the expiration of her acknowledgement of work permit, despite a four months job search on Bébé Nounou, B2 was finally employed by the former employer's cousin of a friend working as a nanny as well. Similarly, after an intermediary experience in schools, G1 returned to nanny care in 2012, working for her former employer's friend. Until 2018, she worked for a family who once again posted a small ad at the American Church in Paris despite also using Nounou Top and Bébé Nounou. Multiple times in the interview, they have highlighted the priority to address the inefficiency of platforms to fulfill their mission – provide full time nanny care job opportunities – even more that they spend time and money, mobilize social support, experience mental load and possibly face job discouragement. Demand for part-time childcare is not only fostered by platforms, it has gained traction since a cultural change from growing awareness of diverse childcare needs from birth to age three, that span both individual and collective care and because of recent workplace and job integration changes for parents (Bressé & Bédel, 2016; Giampino, 2016; Hcfea, 2023). Respondents see the value of technology in suggesting and securing part-time combinations to access decent work. No platform performs it, as a result, nannies explore both offline and online job searches to increase chances to obtain a full time position. Unsuccessful job search induces long periods of unemployment that they have never faced before, and that require them to register at the unemployment agency, sometimes for the first time, to get support and benefits when eligible. This paradigm shows the necessity for nannies, facing the digital divide, to outsource their unpaid work to avoid further exclusion.

4.2 Solidarity gaps in socio-digital ecologies of the nanny

Exploring nanny respondents' experience with online job search and their need to outsource the unpaid work, social support addressing the digital divide were identified. Some nanny respondents have reported former challenges on Internet

access, M1 would go to an NGO office when the Internet access was limited and expensive, and R1 was offered a phone and its subscription by her son when she came to France. For all the respondents help would be requested for technical assistance and emotional reinforcement. For instance, M1, G1, K1 and R1 who have received digital training during their education or former occupation, insist that the ways interactions keep changing according to the device, the website, and over time, making it difficult to remain fully autonomous. From 2009 to 2019, before joining Gribouilli, M1 hadn't noticed that parents could contact her through the Bébé Nounou inbox despite her use of this feature on other platforms and discovered old messages.

> M1: I didn't know that parents could send me messages. Actually during all this time, when I was posting ads, there were parents who'd replied to me.

C1 added that occasional or inexistent need of digital tools do not create opportunities to upskill. To avoid what they consider irreversible errors or abuse like scams, C1, R1, C1, N1 and K1 – which talks about phobia – have most of their online accounts synchronized through their children's devices.

> C1: We don't really need it [computing] on a day-to-day basis in our work. Because our work is, it's concrete, it's not abstract. Once you've had training, you don't use it and you forget. What if I insist on doing it? I'm afraid of making a mistake or not having the desired effect. Once, for example, my son had started something for me. I'd cancelled everything and he had to come from scratch, in fact. It's not like a paper version where you can come back to your draft

> R1: I'm afraid of putting my data where it doesn't belong and expose myself or my family. The internet is so wide and we've seen things happen in the world and we're afraid. I've lost my mobiles and I couldn't get my phone number back. And yet, it was with this number that I access facebook and hotmail. some time ago, my daughter said someone took

> over my account and sent her a message... I've got my everything over there. Imagine, from two thousand and something until 2024. And if people don't know I've lost it, they'll think it's R1. He can to take my photo, or fake I am naked. Yeah. So, since you can't control it, we prefer not to and sometimes I ask my daughter down-to-earth things.

B1 would occasionally organize within networks of her diaspora, while G1 might fill in false personal information, such as a birthday to increase anonymity.

Besides the digital divide, the types of social support they had offline grew in importance: general emotional reinforcement, access to information and financing, as well as assistance with literacy and self-branding. When she learned about Bébé Nounou in 2004, B2 was distressed by precarity and administrative insecurity. She reached out to her former employer who ended up opening the account, offered a premium subscription and trained her.

> B2: I don't know what it's like to go online. I would ask the nannies, the first people around me. They would say: "My son did it for me" or "It was my daughter who did it for me". But I live alone, I was alone. I don't have a child. It was hard for me, because I'd only just been granted a 3 month residence permit so I had to work. I got up the courage to go and see my former employer... She paid for it [the platform fees] with her credit card. And she taught me how to daily update my ad, so that my application would be at the top page. I did it for four months. I was living in anxiety.

During the interview, the nanny respondents shared twelve experiences on care labor platforms, describing twenty actions of support. With the help of the nanny respondents, I have identified three solidarity gaps that are developed below: the organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance and the distribution of economic and social costs (Table 2.).

4.2.1 Organisational complexification of social support

At first glance, these care labor platforms seemed to operate like small ad boards. In reality, a few years after their creation, Bébé Nounou, Nounou Top and Yoopies made contact information no longer accessible (Terms of Service Bébé Nounou - Oct 13th 2007, n.d.)– incentivizing the nanny to work on her visibility to be contacted and both nanny and parent to pay fees. Thus, care labor platforms resemble nanny agencies that would outsource their processes to nannies and parents, eventually making them pay for it (Mateescu & Ticona, 2020).

The nanny respondents are urged to reach out to their socio-digital ecologies, with the demand no longer from bringing leads to performing the unpaid work. Among several challenges, they have to consider the scarcity of the diverse required skills within their socio-digital ecologies, paradoxically without being able to fully identify them in most cases. They would cast the “right” person to take on the job or a part of it, and, if necessary, cast a second person to handle the remaining tasks or address turnover, thereby complexifying social support itself.

Involvement of children is convenient as they already are able to centralize fragmented unpaid work: they already support online activities, often manage security and privacy, including navigating increasingly complex verifications – email, platform, bank accounts –, communicate with each other to overcome the complexity, know about the socio-digital ecologies, are knowledgeable about nanny care and prioritize time for their mothers to stay updated.

Alternatively nanny respondents also reported cases involving former employers or colleagues conveying their voices and acting as references, similar to small ads. This configuration is simpler for the nanny who is directly informed about qualified leads and can still apply in her own name using her account.

4.2.2 Communicational dissonance on the many-to-many platform

Bébé Nounou, Nounou Top and Yoopies user experiences relate to only two personas: the nanny looking for her next job and the parent looking for a nanny. This “biface platform” configuration does not account for the plurality of stakeholders surrounding nannies and parents using the platform, resulting in an overlap of voices.

On the one hand, nanny respondents reported benefiting from social support in branding or literacy with or without their direct participation. The result includes some subjectivity from the author(s) – the style of writing, the perception and relationship with the nanny, and the understanding of ‘professional’ jargon and her career – which may affect how the algorithm ranks the ads as well as influence parents’ gut feeling and ultimate decision to reach out to the nanny.

On the other hand, as previously discussed, ads may be written on behalf of support networks and neighborhoods, functioning as recommendations. It is also true for parents that may be helped by their parents or nannies looking for a substitute or another family to share the fees. While the ads might be considered more authentic and trustworthy, uncertainty remains regarding how it is treated by the algorithm.

From both configurations, first it appears that the three labor platforms shape a many-to-many communication where digital ‘impersonation’ is induced by limited personas, while offline job search shapes many one-to-one communication. Second, the prevalence of written communication – in contrast to offline job search – unprecedentedly enforce literacy as an important asset and create the challenge of (co)producing branding through texts aimed at appealing to the parent’s gut feeling. Third, written communication is interfered with by algorithms. Their opacity makes it impossible to understand how they process keywords, user reactions online and ultimately affect the nanny’s visibility.

4.2.3 Distribution of the economic and social costs a non zero sum game

The economic and social costs of unpaid work for nannies have been described (Pulignano & Marà, 2021). Social support aims at providing relief by sharing or totally absorbing this burden therefore. In reality the distribution of costs is not a zero sum game. On the one hand, several nanny respondents praised the high digital skills of their children, whose efficiency and speed helped reduce various costs.

Conversely, new costs may emerge from this cooperation, predominantly falling on the nanny: additional commuting to the place of support (time and expenses), time spent together (i.e. doubling time) to co-write a text, and discomfort in asking for help or sharing private information, among others.

Nanny respondents have reported difficulties experienced by their support networks or neighborhoods. Their commitments may be irregular or unsustainable over a long period of job searching for the nanny. They are not spared from key tensions underlying job discouragement (Dumont et al., 2024), such as “understanding the platform” whether due to its technology for individuals with low digital skills or its sectoral approach for those outside the care landscape. Finally, five nannies highlighting that their children primarily supported them in various other online activities declared that they were also helping others, as described by the two-step flow and other theories introduced in the literature section. When they did not have their children’s support, some would prefer to reach out to organizations, considering the workload too burdensome for individuals in their socio-digital ecosystems.

As shown in Table 2., most actions of support addressed unpaid work during the early phases of the job search. These often required technical support from relatives, notably children, who acted as digital intermediaries. The recurrence of similar challenges across respondents highlights how the organizational

complexity of social support and communicational dissonance systematically affect their job search. Furthermore, the uneven distribution of economic and emotional costs, visible across multiple support types, reinforces the need to rethink techno-design in ways that account for collective labor and mutual aid.

5. Points of View

The consideration of the nanny in her socio-digital ecologies offers a better understanding of the job search. The study firstly shows that online search is outsourced by nannies in their socio-digital ecologies, as they need support to use to cope with unpaid work on platforms, and that, secondly, that this aid is hindered. Therefore, care labor platforms not only generate unpaid work but also make sharing it troublesome. Based on nanny respondents' experiences, I identified three barriers to mutual aid, conceptualized as solidarity gaps – the organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance, and the distribution of economic and social costs – with no solidarity lever. First, the organization of social support becomes increasingly complex to address the plurality of tasks and skills required, resulting in the splitting of unpaid work across specialized social support that may also necessitate overall management, which the nanny may need to delegate. Second, the biface configuration of the care labor platform forces the superposition of voices in the messaging framed by the nanny and/or support networks and neighborhoods, which may involve trust issues. It also raises concerns about the treatment of algorithms, even more so given that the audience is equally plural with parents also benefiting from social support. Third, sharing the unpaid work of the job search, which may either reduce or increase costs, does not necessarily relieve the burden on nannies and may instead result in discouragement or fatigue for them and within socio-digital ecologies.

In line with the interview, nannies reaching out to Gribouilli have complained about unprecedented loneliness, as individualization on care labor platforms has limited the capabilities of social support – even from professionals –, and has weakened traditional job search by reshaping the culture of trust, along

other digital spaces. In a context where institutions witness nanny shortage, the respondents expect care labor platforms to fulfill their mission and match them to families. Trapped in what feels like an endless job search – up to three years –, they face mental load, powerlessness and precarity that urges some to quit the industry. Within Gribouilli, nannies have articulated motivations to solve issues with care labor platforms while seeking alternatives in platform cooperativism. Through its non profit employment program, the platform cooperatives and advocacy, both mobilizing diverse partnerships, Gribouilli aims to upskill and supporting nannies and their socio-digital ecologies, designing and mutualizing customized nanny care services to overcome the supply-demand mismatch and reinforce job security, and building trust thanks to conversations, narratives, processes.

With a focus on care labor platforms, our study also contributes to research on techno-design within or outside the cooperative movement. Co-design of platform cooperatives at Gribouilli led to mixed offline-online processes decreasing unpaid work and circumventing solidarity gaps. These approaches align with initiatives of platform cooperatives operating on low cost technologies like IMA Limpia or more advanced apps like Equal Care. Further research may lay the foundation for solidarity tech principles that would focus on mutual aid and complement existing frameworks. Nonetheless, as described in the Literature (1.), investment limitations are predominant for care platform cooperatives that thrive with inadequate tools like IMA Limpia and Gribouilli which plan to shut down the platform cooperative in 2025. The use of low cost technologies, or data-minimalism, is a default option due to poor access to investment[8]. Paradoxically, traditional platforms may benefit from significant investment support from private and public on the long term despite unproven track records including in France, the most dynamic country for labor platforms within the European Union (Lima, 2024; Willem Pieter et al., 2021).

In the case of care labor platforms and their investors, the existence of solidarity gaps questions dynamics of exclusion, exploitation and domination. Nannies' critics of care labor platforms echo critiques of the Mommy's Basement

phenomenon which shows how disruptive entrepreneurs misunderstand the intersectionality underlying reproductive labor in their own lives and build platforms that exacerbate racism and misogyny as they do not properly engage with the persons of concern (Kluzik, 2022; Sharma, 2018). Previous research on care labor platforms has pointed out institutional sexism, racism, and classism, historically present in care and domestic work, as root causes of domination patterns, further incentivized by capitalistic business models (Fetterolf, 2022; Kluzik, 2022; Mateescu & Ticona, 2020; McDonald et al., 2021; van Doorn, 2017; Yin, 2024). Those conditions explain the invisibility to which care workers are assigned, even in a post-COVID era that has offered a form of recognition. The overlooking of their realities, including those related to solidarity results in inadequate services for which the general inefficiency –"ultimate paradox of service work" – is also questioned in the era of technological solutionism (Birch, 2025; Dumont et al., 2024; McDonald et al., 2021). Instead real innovation processes would have highlighted socio-digital ecologies. Some exceptions do exist within the techno-design of some care labor platforms like the Belgian Bsit – operating in France and other European countries– and the recent American platform Abule (United States). They embed the socio-digital ecologies in their coding by recognizing some relationships between members, acknowledging prior trust systems and enabling cooperation for instance. The traction of Bsit since 2015 shows that solidarity gaps are not a fatality outside of the Social and Solidarity Economy and collective approach does not jeopardize fundraising nor growth.

Alternatively, using labour process theory on care labor platforms (McDonald), solidarity gaps may be considered as intentional, serving to sustain the necessary control for exploitative business models that partially rely on unpaid work. Simple mutual aid, by creating recognition at the micro level, may foster collective action (Honneth, 1996) and represent an obstacle to labour process theory. Indeed most labor platforms and Big Tech instead advocate for rogue forms of democratization at work under the banner of technosocialism, which ultimately recalls corporate union busting practices (Chan, 2022; Genovese, 2022; Logan, 2025; Schmalz et al., 2023; Vynck et al., 2021). This narrative is highly

problematic as it enables labor platforms to disproportionately participate in multi-stakeholder efforts, like the French presidency-led Tech for good (French Presidency - Elysée, 2020), that may mobilize voluntary commitments but divert attention from the imbalance between individualization and solidarity, the power dynamics at stake and the questions of liability. In this context, the role of states can be questioned as their role as facilitators in such multi-stakeholders efforts may, in fact, conceal a laissez-faire approach, if not a support through public funding that is not matched for public initiatives (Lima, 2024; Steinberg et al., 2024). For instance, childcare labor platforms like Les Tribus de Paris from Paris' City had to shut down in 2018 despite traction, and monenfant.fr from the French Family Branch thrives to upgrade for nannycare (Amara et al., 2016)[9]. The civil society ask for strong policies instead: to regulate technologies, to enforce workers' representation and to support solidarity tech that is left behind in terms of access to funding, infrastructures and expertise, as seen in the case of the creation of CarinaCare by the Service Employees International Union Local 775 and the Department of Social and Health Services (Working on Digital Labour Platforms, 2020). Especially, programs and open source labor platforms and platform cooperatives of cooperatives can multiply and facilitate the development of solidarity tech (Gurumurthy et al., 2021) as seen with Care Together in Australia, the Plan for the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy 2021-2023 from the Barcelona City Council, or Digital Solidarity Economy from the Brazilian Secretary of Solidarity Economy.

5.1 Limitations/further work

For this study, I have noted several limitations. The nanny respondents reside in Île-de-France, where the workforce demographics are locally specific, despite it being the working location for half of the nannies. Also they all participate as active members of Gribouilli and have therefore been supported through programs developing the agency.

Additionally, further work could involve more focus groups, as well as the networks and neighborhoods of nannies and clients, as well as the care

labor platforms. On the one hand, it would enable the identification and the understanding of horizontal solidarity gaps – including verifying whether asymmetry exists between workers-platforms and customers-platforms relationships, as seen in other features (De Marco et al., 2023; Pulignano & Marà, 2021; Willem Pieter et al., 2021)–, and on the other hand, it would provide information on the vertical solidarity gaps. The latter refers to the vertical relationship between "rulers and subjects" (Laitinen, 2023), which I argue is relevant to the authoritative position of the platform and is characterized by support and the embodiment of solidarity.

Finally, partial results were obtained on non-dedicated platforms used by nannies and their socio-digital ecologies to find jobs in a comparative context where solidarity gaps in offline job search were not fully identified either. Specific investigations may offer a broader view of online job searches. Intentional efforts may be developed to investigate overlooked positive impacts of platforms for care workers, including the reduction or mitigation of unpaid work related to offline job search such as the rides to find small ads (4.1).

6. Conclusions

The study shows that, in online job search, as previously in offline job search, nannies rely on their socio-digital ecologies to find jobs. However, the realities around solidarity gaps on care labor platforms hinder collaboration and aid resulting in possible exclusion of nannies from the platform. This situation starkly contrasts with the effective social support traditionally experienced by nannies, workers in the frontline of the reproductive economy. As reflected in the experiences of nanny respondents, assigning unpaid work to nannies is a practice that perpetuates precarious and indecent work, and undermines the solidarity that has long characterized this sector.

This study identified three primary solidarity gaps that hinder mutual aid within their socio-digital ecologies: the organizational complexification of social support, which fragments efforts and requires management often beyond

the individual nanny's capacity; the communicational dissonance caused by overlapping and competing voices in the messaging on biface platforms, raising trust issues and possibly affecting algorithmic treatment of visibility; and the distribution of economic and social costs, which may result in new burdens for nannies or pressure on external assistance. These gaps highlight the inadequacy of care labor platforms regarding solidarity.

Examining the interplay between unpaid labor and solidarity gaps is critical to identifying pathways for fighting digital inequalities and advancing a more universal and inclusive vision of the Web, within and outside platform cooperativism, coping with the limited narrative around the digital divide. Platform cooperatives offer alternatives rooted in data collectivism, starting by centering people of concerns, but need to be further supported through revised investment mechanisms that would offer them the same opportunities than traditional labor platforms to achieve their techno-design.

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Annexes

Annex I: Table 1

Personal information of the respondents on the interview day.

Author's note 1:

Education Level: To facilitate comparison across geographical disparities, the Eurypedia nomenclature was applied.

Author's note 2:

Naturalized constituents have acquired full French citizenship and are no longer required to hold residency permits. Validity is 10 years for permanent residency and between 1 to 4 years for multi-year residence permits. Applicants who are eligible for residency, after undocumented period or expiration of previous permit, may receive a receipt (récépissé) while their application is being processed. These receipts are valid for 1 to 6 months and can be renewed an unlimited number of times. Respondents categorized as undocumented in our study never obtained a residency permit despite pending applications.

	Age	**Education level**	**Current occupations, hourly week (and commuting time)**	**Years of seniority in nanny care**	**Other occupations**	**Personal computer / smartphone**	**Home country**	**Years in France / Res. status**	**Dependants in France or home country**
B1	56	General upper secondary education	Nanny / community organizer, 14 (2)	8	Salesperson	1/1	Colombia	8 / Pluriannual	2
B2	55	General lower secondary education	Nanny, 50 (2)	18	Secretary	0/1	Ivory Coast	23 / Permanent	3

	Age	Education level	Current occupations, hourly week (and commuting time)	Years of seniority in nanny care	Other occupations	Personal computer / smartphone	Home country	Years in France / Res. status	Dependants in France or home country
C1	61	Higher education (Master)	Nanny, 50 (8)	15	Civil servant, childminder	0/1	Ivory Coast	24 / Permanent	5
C2	65	Vocational upper secondary education	Nursery worker, 35 (?)	17	Nanny, pastry cook	0/1	Ivory Coast	21 / Pluriannual	4
G1	52	Higher education (Bachelor)	Nanny / community organizer, 40 (20)	20	Youth worker, caregiver , salesperson, cashier	2/2	Madagascar	28 / Naturalized	1
K1	60	Vocational upper secondary education	Nanny, 20 (0)	40	Accountant	0/1	Ivory Coast	40 / Naturalized	0
M1	41	Higher education (Master)	Nanny / community organizer, 40 (3)	15	Journalist	1/1	Colombia	17 / Receipt	1
N1	58	Higher education (Bachelor)	Unemployed, 0 (0)	10	Proofreader, cashier	0/1	Cameroon	9 / Undocumented	7

	Age	Education level	Current occupations, hourly week (and commuting time)	Years of seniority in nanny care	Other occupations	Personal computer / smartphone	Home country	Years in France / Res. status	Dependants in France or home country
R1	53	Vocational upper secondary education	Nanny, 20 (8)	6	Teacher	1/2	Senegal	8 / Undocumented	5

Annex II: Table 2

Characteristics of actions of support from the socio-digital ecologies.

Author's note 3

Nature of support: In brackets are supports occasionally quoted for the action.
DD stands for digital divide, and may include cases of proxyuse.

Actions of support	**Nature of support**	**Unpaid work**	**Phase**	**Solidarity gaps**
Lend a device	Technical assistance - DD (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Investment in work equipment and products	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Buy a device	Technical assistance - DD Financing (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Investment in work equipment and products	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support and the distribution of economic and social costs
Share Internet access	Technical assistance - DD (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Investment in work equipment and products	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)

Actions of support	**Nature of support**	**Unpaid work**	**Phase**	**Solidarity gaps**
Offer the Internet subscription	Technical assistance - DD Financing (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Investment in work equipment and products	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support and the distribution of economic and social costs
Recommend or advise against a platform (direct communication, rating)	Information/ strategy (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support
Open an account	Technical assistance - DD Literacy (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	Crafting of the profile	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Fill in information (profile, preferences)	Technical assistance - DD Literacy Branding (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	Crafting of the profile	Organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance (and the distribution of economic and social costs)

Actions of support	**Nature of support**	**Unpaid work**	**Phase**	**Solidarity gaps**
Draft a text (profile, small ads)	Technical assistance - DD Literacy Branding (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	Crafting of the profile	Organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Routinely update (small ads)	Technical assistance - DD Information/strategy (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	Crafting of the profile	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Get a platform subscription or options	Technical assistance - DD Information/strategy Branding (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Paying a one-time fee for ID verification or Paying fees to communicate with clients, apply for jobs, or increase job opportunities	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)

Actions of support	**Nature of support**	**Unpaid work**	**Phase**	**Solidarity gaps**
Offer the platform subscription or options	Technical assistance - DD Information/strategy Financing Branding (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement	Paying a one-time fee for ID verification or Paying fees to communicate with clients, apply for jobs, or increase job opportunities	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support and the distribution of economic and social costs
Answer small ads	Technical assistance - DD Literacy Branding (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	Application for the jobs	Organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Answer messages in the inbox	Technical assistance - DD Information/ strategy Literacy Branding (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	Application for the jobs Reviewing of these application statuses	Organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance (and the distribution of economic and social costs)

Actions of support	**Nature of support**	**Unpaid work**	**Phase**	**Solidarity gaps**
Offer commuting fees	Financing (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Meeting potential clients in person, involving commuting to a client's home or a meeting place or Travel time to and from work	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support and the distribution of economic and social costs
Report small ads or profiles	Technical assistance - DD Information/ strategy Literacy (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	Application for the jobs	Organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Close an account	Technical assistance - DD Information/ strategy (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	Job searching and applications	N/A	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)

Actions of support	**Nature of support**	**Unpaid work**	**Phase**	**Solidarity gaps**
Educate on one or many tasks	Information/ strategy (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	One or many above	One or many above	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Inform or advise on rights, job search planning, negotiation	Information/ strategy (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	One or many above	One or many above	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Manage everything in nanny's name	All above (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	All above	All above	Organisational complexification of social support, the communicational dissonance (and the distribution of economic and social costs)
Manage everything in one's name	All above (Emotional reinforcement - DD, Other emotional reinforcement)	All above	All above	Organisational complexification of social support (and the distribution of economic and social costs)

Endnotes

1 Jaya Vaghela, Consultant at SEWA Co-operative Federation, phone call on January 8th, 2025.

2 Yasiris Palacios Borja, Sales Representative at IMA Limpia, correspondence from January 8th to 12th, 2025.

3 Aminata Diouf, Co-Founder and CEO of Gribouilli and GED Sans Frontières, 2025.

4 Akkanut Wantanasombut, volunteer at Homenet Thailand, researcher at the Institute of Asian Studies in Chulalongkorn University, and founder of Tamsang-Tamsong, videoconference on January 9th, 2025

5 Juan Cuautle, MA Program Director, Cooperative Business Development Program at the Center for Life in Sunset Park, videoconference on January 8th, 2025

6 Juan Cuautle, MA Program Director, Cooperative Business Development Program at the Center for Life in Sunset Park, videoconference on January 8th, 2025

7 Juan Cuautle, MA Program Director, Cooperative Business Development Program at the Center for Life in Sunset Park, videoconference on January 8th, 2025, and Akkanut Wantanasombut, volunteer at Homenet Thailand, researcher at the Institute of Asian Studies in Chulalongkorn University, and founder of Tamsang-Tamsong, videoconference on January 9th, 2025

8 Yasiris Palacios Borja, Sales Representative at IMA Limpia, correspondence from January 8th to 12th, 2025, and Aminata Diouf, Co-Founder and CEO of Gribouilli and GED Sans Frontières, 2025.

9 Aminata Diouf, Co-Founder and CEO of Gribouilli and GED Sans Frontières, 2025.

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